

I admire Kumar Sangakkara, both the batsman and the man. That speech that he made at Lord's for the Cowdrey Lecture, it was not only a very intelligent speech, but a very brave one. It didn't surprise me because that's the way he's played his cricket and he is a deep thinker on the game and he's a man that I'd love to see involved in the game because cricket brains like his are much needed. As a batsman he was a terrific player. I loved watching him bat, I loved the way he played the horizontal bat shots, loved the way he played spinners... I hope that's not the finish of his contributions to the game of cricket.

Former Australia captain and current commentator Ian Chappell



As a tribute to departing Sri Lanka legend Kumar Sangakkara, The Daily Star has decided to reprint the iconic image from when Sangakkara scored his only triple-century on February 5, 2014 in the second Test against Bangladesh in Chittagong.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

Kumar's tons on & off the field

When the Sri Lanka national team enters the P Saravanamuttu Stadium in Colombo today, it will be the last time they will do so along with the legendary Kumar Sangakkara. Going into his last Test, the left-hander boasts a phenomenal record. He has scored 12,350 runs at a batting average of 57.71; the latter figure is the highest among the top ten run-getters in Test cricket. Remove the wicketkeeping gloves and the numbers rocket further. As a specialist batsman, the left-hander has averaged 67.39. He also has 11 double-hundreds. For Bangladesh's cricket fans it was both a nightmare and an honour to witness the perfectionist raise his highest Test score, 314, in their very own backyard back in 2014. However, it's not just the numbers that makes Sangakkara what he is. On the field he displayed a near flawless approach and off it he charmed everyone with his bold, yet eloquent, personality. As a tribute to the legend, The Daily Star recalls a few inspiring tales which explain why the left-hander is one of a kind:

➔ The Chittagong Test in 2014 in which Sangakkara scored his personal best of 314 in the first innings, also witnessed a century from the bat of the left-hander in second innings. He left his opposition, the fans and everyone else in the stadium completely mesmerised. So much so that the 30-odd journalists at the press briefing, after the post-match briefing, rushed towards Sangakkara with the scorecard of the match in their hands. They all wanted his signature on it. Not used to such a response back in Sri Lanka, Sangakkara, at first, was visibly taken aback. Ten seconds later though he sat down on the podium yet again and patiently obliged

everyone and even stood up to take photographs with them.

➔ When Sangakkara took to the podium to deliver the MCC Cowdrey Lecture at Lord's not many expected him to utter the words that he did. In what has been described as one of the best cricketing speeches ever, the left-hander eloquently described how corruption had encroached upon Sri Lanka's cricket board. "Players from within the team itself became involved in power games. Officials elected to power in this way in turn manipulated player loyalty to achieve their own ends. At times board politics would spill over into the team causing rift, ill-feeling and distrust," he

had said. He received a standing ovation.

➔ In an interview with Cricinfo recently, Sri Lanka's former coach Paul Farbrace narrated a tale to explain how Sangakkara had taught him a very valuable coaching lesson. "He is very specific about his left foot. I was watching him in the nets and concentrating more on the bowlers than him. But after about 10 balls he asked how his foot was looking. I told him it looked great," said Farbrace. Sangakkara later took him to a corner and told him that his foot had gone back and across towards the leg stump thrice and then asked him never to provide any false information.

➔ The left-hander once attended a congregation of young kids to teach them the 'importance of reading'. He was invited to speak for just five minutes. Yes, he did speak on the given subject -- not for five, but for twenty minutes -- every second related to the main topic. Yet, at the same time he kept the entire audience awed with the eloquent literacy of the speaker and deep knowledge he had on the subject and translating that into a manner that would keep the interest of the young audience. Finally, it was not just the opportunity of meeting that icon in person, but, the kids encountered a man who taught them the importance of reading.

Sanga's Test starts today

AFP, Colombo



India and Sri Lanka head into Thursday's second Test in Colombo with the rival captains determined not to be swayed by the emotions surrounding Kumar Sangakkara's last match.

The 37-year-old Sri Lanka great, who is the highest run-getter among those still playing at the top level, will bid adieu to international cricket after the match, ending a glorious 15-year career.

Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews, buoyant by a brilliant 63-run win in the first Test in Galle, said the boys wanted to win the three-match series to give Sangakkara a suitable farewell.

"This is obviously an emotional game for all of us," Mathews said on Wednesday. "Sangakkara has not only been a great servant of the game, but he is a great human being too."

"We can't thank him enough for what he has done for Sri Lankan cricket and the team over the past so many years. We thank him truly and wish him all the very best for his future endeavours."

"It's going to be a tough game for him as well emotionally. But all good things have to come to an end unfortunately."

"The best thing we can do is try and win the series for him. We have trained hard and are ready to go."

Asked how Sangakkara had reacted in the dressing room about his impending departure, Mathews said: "He has worked as hard as any of us. I am sure he is determined to sign off with a hundred."

Sangakkara will want to end an unusually barren streak at the P Sara Oval where he has fallen for zero in each of his last three Tests, including a first-ball duck against Pakistan in June.

India skipper Virat Kohli, looking to level scores in his first full series as captain, said the tourists were not distracted by the hype over Sangakkara's retirement.

"We are certainly not distracted by it," Kohli said. "In fact, this will be more of a strange situation for Sri Lanka than us."

"We look up to Sangakkara as a great cricketer. But the emotions in the two teams will be different."

Sangakkara scored five and 40 against the Indians in Galle, where Sri Lanka snatched a remarkable victory after seemingly heading for a crushing loss.

Mathews said Sri Lanka had the edge going into the second Test, but warned his team against taking victory for granted.

"We have the edge because we pulled a rabbit out of the hat," he said. "But we have shoved the win in Galle under the carpet. We know we have to play good cricket again to win because the Indians are a tough side to beat."

Mathews said seamer Nuwan Pradeep had suffered a hamstring injury, but young fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera was likely to return after missing the Galle Test with a side strain.

Proteas draw first blood

REUTERS, Pretoria

A century from Hashim Amla laid the foundation for home success on Wednesday as South Africa beat New Zealand by 20 runs to win their opening one-day international at Centurion.

Amla displayed the form that had him rated the world's best batsman as he mastered the bowling on a slow track and scored 124 for South Africa to open with 304 for seven off their 50 overs.

Amla scored his 21st ODI century off 126 balls and featured in a 185-run partnership for the second wicket with Rilee Rossouw, who tempered his usual aggressive style to build a steady innings before being bowled in the 42nd over for 89.

New Zealand kept up with the required run rate for most of their chase, with Tom Latham and captain Kane Williamson amassing 104 runs for the second wicket, but lost wickets at key intervals and were bowled out for 284 in the 49th over of the first of a three-match series.

The second ODI is in Potchefstroom on Sunday.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SOUTH AFRICA: 304 for 7 in 50 overs (Amla 124, Rossouw 89; Milne 2-51, McClenaghan 2-72)
NEW ZEALAND: 284 all out in 48.1 overs (Latham 60, Williamson 47, Neesham 41; Tahir 2-40, Philander 2-51)

Result: South Africa won by 20 runs
Man-of-the-match: Hashim Amla



Bangladesh women's team opener Rubaiya Haider arrives to practise as her side is getting ready for the visiting South Africans next month.

PHOTO: BCB

England in search of history

Anderson unfit; Clarke and Rogers bow out

AFP, London



England may have already regained the Ashes but captain Alastair Cook is determined not to let-up when they face Australia in the fifth and final Test at The Oval on Thursday -- a match that marks rival skipper Michael Clarke's farewell to international cricket.

Cook's men triumphed by an innings and 78 runs in the fourth Test at Trent Bridge to take a winning 3-1 lead in the series after Australia, with England pacesman Stuart Broad taking a stunning eight for 15, were dismissed for just 60 in 111 balls on the opening morning -- the shortest completed first innings of any Test.

No England side has ever won four Tests in a home Ashes series. But they are now within sight of their biggest margin of victory since Mike Brearley led England to a 5-1 success down under against an Australia side weakened by defections to the 'rebel' World Series

Cricket in 1978-79.

Taking this series 4-1 would certainly go some way to avenging the memory of the 5-0 whitewash inflicted upon England in Australia some 18 months ago.

"Cooky called us all on Tuesday, to say: 'Let's make sure we turn up knowing that we're in a battle and that we want to start again, because I've got a burning desire for this to be 4-1'," Broad said.

"Certainly those of us involved in that 5-0 loss (in 2013-14) feel that determination to make this a good week," he added.

However, things will not be as easy for England as they will have to do without their strike bowler James Anderson, who has failed to recover fully from a side strain, Cook said Wednesday.

Anderson, who suffered the injury in the third Test at Edgbaston, was still around a week away from full fitness, added Cook. He only returned to bowl in the nets on Tuesday.

They have another major selection decision to make -- whether they should give a Test debut to leg-spinner Adil

Rashid.

Trevor Bayliss, England's Australian coach, has spoken all series of how he is prepared to play two spinners and Rashid would certainly come into consideration against Pakistan in the UAE, where the pitches assist slow bowlers.

On the other hand, Clarke, one of Australia's greatest batsmen will be desperate to finish with a flourish as indeed will opener Chris Rogers, who is also retiring from international cricket after the fifth Test.

"I'd be lying if I said there wasn't a lot of disappointment amongst the group," said Rogers, with Australia now having lost four successive Ashes series in England.

"We came here to win and we've been outplayed. It's been a difficult week. A lot of guys have felt a bit flat, I imagine."

"This is a big last game. Obviously it's Michael's retirement as well, but not only that, there's places up for grabs in this side. No one's taking that for granted," Rogers added.

'Proper people needed for it'

SPORTS REPORTER



Gazi Ashraf Hossain warned yesterday that if the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) started this year's Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) without a proper structure, then it would likely face the same fate as the previous editions.

"I have no idea what is going on, but one thing everyone must understand is that the board needs to have a proper structure, proper guidelines -- in one word, a project profile for this T20 tournament -- to avoid the embarrassment we had previously faced," said the former national skipper and BCB director while speaking exclusively to The Daily Star over phone.

Gazi Ashraf, the chairman of the first BPL's governing council, knows better than anyone else how suicidal it is to start tournament of this magnitude without a proper framework.

"After what I have learned from hither and thither and from the media, I am still confused about whether the board is going to stage a franchise tournament or a corporate T20 league. The board has been talking about the third edition for a long time, so by now they must have done all the paperwork."

"When you say anything, you must talk in line with the reference of the guidelines, but I am not sure whether that has been the case. The board has decided to run the show, rather than giving the job to an event management company, so they must be more careful," continued Gazi Ashraf.

Referring to last edition's chaos, Gazi Ashraf raised the question why nobody had taken responsibility for its failure.

"If a player or coach can get penalised for their failure, then why not an official? Sinha bhai [current BPL governing council chairman Afzalur Rahman Sinha] is a true lover of the game, an honest man and a renowned organiser, but in my opinion he should be assisted by some knowledgeable people."

"If we want to showcase this tournament to the world then we must employ people like Mahbubul Anam [BCB vice-president] and Ahmed Sajjadul Alam Bobby [BCB director]. To give this a professional shape and avoid any further embarrassment, you need these kinds of people to be involved," he said.

"I think we have had enough experience of how much damage can be done if there is a conflict of interest, so the board must be careful that there is no conflict of interest. Mallick [IH Mallick, BCB director and member secretary of BPL governing council] is heading the important logistics committee and there will be a lot of logistical issues in the BPL, so it will not only be a burden for him, but also questions will be raised about conflict of interest if he also continues as member secretary of the BPL," continued Gazi Ashraf.

He also rubbished talks that the board would not make profits from this tournament.

"Why won't they [make profits]? It's such an important property. The board must earn from it. Are we going to stage a tournament like the Dhaka league? If the idea is to accommodate a T20 league in the domestic calendar then there is no need to make it a franchise-based tournament."

"If we could earn Tk 20-22 crore from the first edition, despite the difficulties we faced, then what's wrong today? Our cricket is going through a good time, so this is the time for the board to cash in on every aspect," questioned Gazi Ashraf.

"I don't see any reason to underestimate the commercial value of this league. Once again, I must say if we want to make it a sustainable tournament then we must have professionals and knowledgeable people to run it under a proper



GAZI ASHRAF HOSSAIN

Rahmatullah unwavering

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) general secretary Khaza Rahmatullah yesterday claimed he would only resign from his post if anyone can prove any allegations against him.

He made the statement during a press conference arranged by the game's governing body after whispers in the sports arena had suggested Rahmatullah might resign in a bid to put an end to the lengthy stalemate over the non-participation of four rebel clubs -- Mohammedan SC, Mariner Youngs Club, Wari Club and Wanderers Club -- in the premier division league.

"A group of people have been demanding my resignation without any specific allegation. I won't hesitate to resign if they provide prove that I have been involved with any graft, nepotism or anything damaging to hockey," said Rahmatullah, who claimed that the federation has, in last three years, held 50 programmes including domestic and international tournaments, training and refreshers courses.

The four rebel clubs have been demanding resignation of BHF's elected committee since its formation in July, 2013 and have been boycotting the premier league while Usha Krira Chakra, the joint champions of the last league, demanded participation of all clubs as a prerequisite for their participation.

When asked about whether the league might start anytime soon, Rahmatullah said, "We will soon communicate with the deputy sports minister and follow instructions we get from him."